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CHILE: Crackdown Produces Violence

The violence following President Pinochet's decision to crack down on participants in the nationwide protests on Thursday probably will increase pressure from elements within his government to accelerate political concessions. Government spokesmen report 17 deaths, and there were unconfirmed reports of 1,200 arrests, as troops and police used tear gas, clubs, and automatic weapons against the demonstrators. A prominent civilian conservative favoring a political opening and the return of exiles was sworn in on Wednesday to replace an Army general as Interior Minister.

Comment: The demonstrations were the most extensive and violent so far, and the funerals for those killed could prompt more violence. The security forces' lack of discipline—reflected in the reported deaths of children from stray gunfire—will offset any positive effects of the recent cabinet changes. Pinochet faces increasing concern in the military over the lack of order and a bolder and more unified opposition. Unless significant progress is made soon toward civilian rule, a political crisis is likely to develop.

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